

1998 Galtymore Race Report - by Douglas Barry

Despite mist and driving rain, John Lenihan (Riocht) added the Irish Championship race on Galtymore in Tipperary to his list of wins this season. The Irish champion had to break his own record by nearly one and a half minutes to hold off Northern Ireland champion Brian Ervine (Ballydrain). The in form Ervine made the foray south to test the recently crowned All Ireland champion from Kerry on this demanding 12 kilometre course with its 1295 metres of climb and descent. (An average climb and descent of 21.6% !!!)

The Ballydrain runner headed Lenihan up the steep climbs of Cush and Galtybeg mountains, and was just pipped by a fingernail to the summit of Galtymore by the Riocht man. On the way back, Lenihan pressed home his slight advantage by pushing hard on the rough descents and pulled out a narrow lead which he stretched on the final drop off Cush. The champion crossed the line near Clydagh Bridge in the Glen of Aherlow just under 2 minutes ahead of Ervine with the English based Shane Green (Pudsey & Bramley) third.

In a race many runners said was run in the worst weather they had ever seen and which prompted many retirements, Majella Diskin came through the swirling ball of mist to win the womens category. Former international Mike McAuliffe took the vets prize and 40 seconds off Martin McDonald's record set last year. Ballyduff's Fergal Fitzmaurice won the shorter Junior race up and down Cush and set a new record of 32 minutes 33 seconds to beat John Grimes and Martin Bradshaw in a close run race over a slippery course.

Later, in the Caravansery Bar a mile or so down the road, we looked up to see clearing skies and the lifting of the rain clouds which marred a route that can be magical on a clear day. Settling down before dark pints and a fervid Munster hurling final played out to a thrilling draw, we thought of 1999 and a Galtymore race that might reveal the views that are an entrancing feature of this part of Tipperary.